

economies (including the United States) are estimated to account for some 40 per cent of total world trade, and 50 per cent of aggregated gross domestic product.

APEC, like the region's explosive growth, is a relatively recent phenomenon, but since its creation five years ago it has become the region's main forum for discussions on regional growth, economic interdependence, strengthening the multilateral trading system and reducing barriers to trade in goods, services and investment. It has also become a major vehicle for co-operation on sectoral issues, such as environmental problems.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Canada finds a range of important issues and opportunities. We must continue to establish beneficial trading relationships and we must also work hard to promote our bilateral as well as multilateral linkages.

We continue to support economic and social development in the region, while being mindful of its cultural diversities, and we must capitalize on our natural "human" advantages to realize this tremendous potential.

I have spent some time talking about Canada's interests — and my role — in expanding our relationship with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region. I should here, however, take a leaf from the book of Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir who spoke at the opening of this year's Pacific Basin Economic Co-operation Conference in Kuala Lumpur. In his address, Dr. Mahathir described the concentric circles of identity and belonging that surround him as a Malaysian in the late 20th century.

He talked of being a Malaysian but also a member of ASEAN, a Southeast Asian, an East Asian and a "globalist," and of the interests and priorities that engage him on each of those levels.

When we talk of our relationship with the Asia-Pacific region, we are implicitly aware of those same spheres of interest. For a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways, our focus and our activity tend from the general to the particular: from broad, what we might call hemispheric issues, such as arms control and disarmament, to more direct dialogue with a region — Canada's relationship with ASEAN is a good case in point. But at the very heart of our focus on Asia are our bilateral relationships with each of the countries that ring the Pacific.

Indeed, it is the importance of one of those relationships — our links to Malaysia — that brings me here today.

Up until recently, speakers and writers normally referred to the Canada-Malaysia relationship in terms suggesting unfulfilled potential, as one that is developing, emerging, growing. At the same time, Malaysians were prone to ask things like: "Where are